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RUEHCD/AMCONSUL CIUDAD JUAREZ 0220
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL 0221
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RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000223

SIPDIS

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STATE FOR AF/W
STATE FOR INR/AA
WARSAW FOR LISA PIASCIK
CIUDAD JUAREZ FOR DONNA BLAIR
ISTANBUL FOR TASHAWNA SMITH
SAO PAULO FOR ANDREW WITHERSPOON
DOE FOR CAROYLN GAY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/22/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: DESPERATION MARKS LAGOS ELECTIONS

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

11. (C) Summary: In two March 15 meetings, a Progressive Peoples Alliance and a People's Democratic Party candidate gave opposing views on the likelihood of timely elections. They agreed that Lagos State would be the site of fiercely-disputed elections and thus sporadic, unpredictable violence would erupt in locations throughout the state. End summary.

Political Violence Is Expected In Lagos

12. (C) In a March 15 meeting, Progressive Peoples Alliance (PPA) gubernatorial candidate for Lagos State, Oluremi Adiukwu-Bakare voiced increasing pessimism about elections in Lagos. The violent clashes between supporters of opposing political factions would increase in frequency and force as the elections neared, warned Bakare. Bakare, who officially launched her campaign on March 17, said she would travel with heavy security. Violent clashes were likely to erupt at any time, she lamented. Pointing to the March 12 attack in Ajah, Lagos, where a group of young men were reported to have attacked Action Congress (AC) members at a campaign rally, Bakare said it was impossible to predict where riots might erupt.

13. (C) In a separate meeting on March 15, Demola Seriki, People's Democratic Party (PDP) senatorial candidate, echoed these concerns. He enumerated the localities in Lagos State that would be fiercely contested and where tensions would run high. Seriki predicted Alimosho would be a battle ground between the Action Congress (AC) and the People's Democratic Party (PDP). There were influential politicians from both the PDP and AC in Alimosho, who each controlled large segments of votes. The 2003 election had been hotly contested, Seriki recounted; the margin of victory for the Alliance for Democracy (AD), the predecessor of AC, in Alimosho was 4800

votes Alimosho commanded a high volume of votes, said Seriki, and the gubernatorial candidate who won in Alimosho would win in Lagos State.

14. (C) In addition to Alimosho, Mushin, Badagry, and Lagos Island would prove to be fiercely contested sites. In 2003, the AD lost Badagry. The AC would now struggle to win Badagry, predicted Seriki. On Lagos Island, the PDP held the advantage, said Seriki. PDP gubernatorial candidate Musiliu Obanikoro and PDP Chair Bode George hail from Lagos Island, as does Seriki. Obanikoro, who maintains a residence on Lagos Island, had a long relationship with the "area boys" in the vicinity. The "area boys", loosely-organized youth gangs, would be mobilized to support Obanikoro and dissuade the opposition, explained Seriki. (Comment: What Seriki did not state as clearly as he could was that the area boys would be Obanikoro's muscle to both attack the opposition in some areas and defend themselves from opposition attack in others. End comment.)

15. (C) Speaking of the disturbance that erupted in Ajah, Seriki explained this was not political in nature. News media reported that riots, incited by "an unnamed gubernatorial candidate of another party", erupted just before Lagos Governor Bola Tinubu was scheduled to arrive. The riot was not incited by an opposition candidate, Seriki argued. Rather, the cause was a dispute over land acquisition. Local villagers were protesting the State Government's granting land titles for what they considered their land to well-connected individuals. The PDP had been monitoring news reports about this incident, and, Seriki said, he was pleased that the AC had not accused the PDP of inciting the riot.

Opposing Views Of The Elections

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16. (C) Judging from recent events, Bakare feared it was likely the elections would be postponed. She accused President Obasanjo of pressing the Independent National Electoral Commission into disqualifying the candidates he did not support. President Obasanjo did not want to leave the presidency in May, Bakare said, and was creating conditions that could later be used as justifications for postponing the elections. These included the disqualification of candidates; protracted legal battles over the constitutionality of the disqualifications, which would not be resolved in time for the elections; and INEC's inability to print ballots and distribute those to all the polling sites. Voters were being prepared for the eventuality of postponed elections through the news media's recent political coverage, Bakare argued. After having heard so much about the possibility of postponed elections, voters would not be surprised if this occurred, she concluded.

17. (C) Seriki, on the other hand, insisted elections would go forth as planned. Fears of insecurity and unpreparedness for the elections were unfounded, he said, and argued that negativity had become a "mantra" of the news media and of Nigerians, in general. INEC was "doing a good job" and would have no trouble printing and distributing ballots before election day. It was Vice President Atiku's camp that was inciting unrest and was involved in fear-mongering, he accused. Seriki argued that Atiku's disqualification by INEC was constitutional.

Pre-Electoral Tension Is High

18. (C) If Babatunde Fashola, Lagos Governor Bola Tinubu's hand-picked successor, did not win the Lagos gubernatorial election, Tinubu would not hand over power, Seriki predicted. Seriki said investigation into Tinubu's activities had been

completed and Tinubu would be arrested, presumably by the EFCC, upon leaving office. Without a strong ally in the governor's seat, Tinubu's fate would be sealed by imminent criminal prosecution. Seriki accused Tinubu of blatant corruption and said Tinubu had chosen Fashola, a political neophyte, as his successor only because he could continue to benefit from the spoils of the governorship.

¶9. (C) Seriki explained that the tension in advance of the elections was palpable because there was so much at stake. Not only was this the first civilian to civilian handover of the presidency, but it was also the first democratic election where many state executives have served their terms to the constitutional limit. Incumbents, desperate to retain influence and access to the monetary rewards attendant to public office in Nigeria, were imposing hand-picked successors by whatever means possible, Seriki summed.

Comment

¶10. (C) Bakare and Seriki are veteran politicians. Their differing views on the upcoming elections reflect their personal political fortunes. Bakare, a woman and a candidate of the relatively weak PPA, is understandably more pessimistic about the elections. Seriki, on the other hand, is a member of the PDP, the largest party in the country. He is confident he will beat his opponents in the Lagos senatorial race.

BROWNE